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INFO RUEHVL/AMEMBASSY VILNIUS 3368
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3140
RUEHRA/AMEMBASSY RIGA 1416
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 3037
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KIEV 2919
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 0666
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L MINSK 001148

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOVBO](#)
SUBJECT: Beaten Zubr Hospitalized

Classified by Ambassador George Krol for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Nikita Sasim, one of the Zubr youth group's coordinators, was punched several times by OMON riot police as they dispersed a protest September 16. He went to the hospital that evening and was diagnosed with a concussion. He will remain in hospital until September 22. Zubr claims police hit or kicked six other Zubr members at the demonstration, although none were seriously hurt. End summary.

¶2. (C) The United Civic Party conducted a Chain of Concern on October Square on September 16, the sixth anniversary of the disappearance and probable murder of Viktor Gonchar and Anatoly Krasovsky. Approximately 100 people from the 5+ coalition and the Zubr and Malady Front youth groups participated. They were met by 25 plainclothes BKGB and 40 uniformed OMON. In recent protests OMON have formed a line to push protesters off the square and down the street. To counter this, the opposition protested in four shifts, with a new line forming each time the previous was pushed away. Emboff observers stated this new tactic clearly frustrated the police.

¶3. (C) Zubr's Aleksandr Atroshchenkau told Econoff the OMON immediately seized the flag Sasim was waving, but left him the stick it was hung on. Sasim therefore began to wave his jean jacket. Atroshchenkau believes this aggravated the OMON, who punched Sasim several times in the head as they pushed the protesters off the square. Atroshchenkau claimed six other Zubr members were also punched or kicked, but none were seriously hurt. Human rights lawyer Vladimir Labkovich, from the Vyasna NGO, reported to Econoff that he witnessed these beatings. Emboffs who attended did not see any violence, most likely because other demonstrators surrounded those being hit. There were no arrests.

¶4. (C) According to Atroshchenkau, Sasim began to feel unwell after the protest and went to the hospital that evening, where he was diagnosed with a concussion. He is expected to be released September 22.

¶5. (C) Comment: In recent years police have broken up many protests, but generally left the Chains of Concern alone. In the past several months OMON have started pushing demonstrators at the Chains of Concern off the square, in some cases herding them for over a mile away from the site. September 16 was the first time OMON used violence against any of these demonstrators. As the 2006 presidential

elections draw nearer, and Lukashenko becomes more obviously paranoid about the West and the opposition, such violence is likely to be repeated.

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